Nationalism and cultures of democracy

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If nationalism is over, we shall miss it. Revolution may be the project of a vanguard party acting on behalf of its masses. Resistance to capitalist globalization may be pursued by a multifarious and inchoate multitude. But imagining democracy requires thinking of "the people" as active and coherent and oneself as both a member and an agent. Liberalism informs the notion of individual agency, but provides weak purchase at best on membership and on the collective cohesion and capacity of the *demos*. In the modern era, the discursive formation that has most influentially underwritten these dimensions of democracy is nationalism.[1]

To be sure, nationalism has also been mobilized in sharply antidemocratic projects; it has often organized disturbingly intolerant attitudes; it has led to distorted views of the world and excesses of both pride and imagined insults. Nationalists have exaggerated and naturalized the historical and never more than partial unity of the nation. The hyphen in nation-state tied the modern polity—with enormously more intense and effective internal administration than any large-scale precursors—to the notion of a historically or naturally unified people who intrinsically belong together. It

has been a recipe for conflicts both internal and external. Populations straddle borders or move long distances to new states while retaining allegiances to old nations. Dominant groups demand that governments enforce cultural conformity, challenging both the individual freedom and the vitality that comes from cultural creativity. These faults have made it easier for liberals to dismiss nationalism from their theories of democracy. But this has not made it less important in the real world.

There are of course also many problems that affect everyone on earth—environmental degradation, for example, or small arms trade. Nationalist rhetoric is commonly employed in excuses for governmental failures to address these problems. Transnational movements press for action. But for the most part the action comes, if it does, from national states.

Likewise, there is no non-national and cosmopolitan solution available to the humanitarian crisis in Darfur. International humanitarian action is vitally important, but more as compensation for state failures and evils than as a substitute for better states. More generally, lacking a capable state may be as much as source of disaster as state violence. National integration and identity are also basic to many efforts at economic development and to contesting the imposition of a neoliberal model of global economic growth that ignores or undermines local quality of life and inhibits projects of self-government. Nations also remain basic units of international cooperation.

In fact nationalism and nation-states retain considerable power. Rather than their general decline, what we see today is loss of faith in progress through secular and civic nationalism and state-building projects. This makes it harder to appreciate the positive work that nationalism has done and still does (alongside its evil uses). Nations provide for structures of belonging that build bridges between local communities and mediate between these and globalization. Nations organize the primary arenas for democratic political participation. Nationalism helps mobilize collective commitment to public institutions, projects, and debates. Nationalism encourages mutual responsibility across divisions of class and region. We may doubt both the capacities of nation-states and the morality of many versions of nationalism, but we lack realistic alternatives.

We are poorly prepared to theorize democracy if we cannot theorize the social solidarity of democratic peoples. Substituting ethical attention to the obligations all human beings share does not fill the void. It lacks an understanding of politics as the active creation of ways of living together, not only distributing power but developing institutions. And accordingly, it lacks a sense of democracy as a human creation necessarily situated in culture and history, always imperfect and open to improvement, and therefore always also variable.

Moreover, we need to see the mutual relationship that has tied nationalism to democracy throughout the modern era. Nationalism was crucial to collective democratic sub-

jectivity, providing a basis for the capacity to speak as "we the people," the conceptualization of constitution-making as collective self-empowerment, and commitment to accept the judgment of citizens in general on contentious questions. As important, democracy encouraged the formation of national solidarity. When states were legitimated on the basis of serving the commonwealth, when collective struggles won improved institutions, when a democratic public sphere spanned class, regional, religious and other divisions this strengthened national solidarity. It is a pernicious illusion to think of national identity as the prepolitical basis for a modern state—an illusion certainly encouraged by some nationalists. It is equally true that national identity is (like all collective identity) inherently political; created in speech, action and recognition. A democratic public is not merely contingent on political solidarity, it can be productive of it.

Of course political community can be and is constructed on bases other than nations. And of course nations can be transformed; they need not be treated as prepolitically given but can be recognized as always politically as well as culturally made and therefore remarkable. But the idea of democracy requires some structures of integration, some cultural capacity for internal communication, some social solidarity of "the people."

Liberalism Within or Beyond Nations

Political liberalism developed largely in the effort to theorize the transition from pre-national empires, monar-

chies, and aristocracies to nations. Nations were the primary political structures in which liberal individuals would be equals and have more or less universal rights.

The same liberalism was well attuned, of course, to recognizing the failures of actually existing nations, including especially failures to extend equal rights to all citizens. Liberals generally respond to these failings of nations and nationalism by abandoning reliance on historically achieved solidarities and subjectivities. This tendency has been reinforced by recognition of the ways in which globalization limits states. Seeking greater justice and liberty than actual nations have offered, they apply liberal ideas about the equality of and relations among individuals at the scale of humanity as a whole. But it is not clear that ratcheting up universalism makes it any more readily achievable.

In addition, this attempt to pursue liberal equality and justice at a more global level reveals a tension previously beneath the surface of liberalism. So long as liberalism could rely (explicitly or implicitly) on the idea of nation to supply a prepolitical constitution of "the people" it could be a theory both of democracy and universal rights. But the pursuit of greater universalism commonly comes at the expense of solidarity, for solidarity is typically achieved in more particularistic formations. Since there is no democracy without social solidarity, as liberalism is transposed to the global level it becomes more a theory of universal rights or justice and less a theory of democratic politics.

Liberalism has been pervasive in democratic the-ory—enough so that its blind spots have left the democratic imaginary impoverished. This shows up in thinking about (or thinking too little about) solidarity, social cohesion, col-lective identity, and boundaries. With its concerns focused overwhelmingly on freedom, equality, and justice for indi-vidual persons, liberalism has had at best a complicated re-lationship with nationalism. For much of the modern era, liberalism worked within the tacit assumption that nation-states defined the boundaries of citizenship. John Rawls made the assumption explicit:

> (…) we have assumed that a democratic society, like any political society, is to be viewed as a complete and closed social system. It is complete in that it is self-sufficient and has a place for all the main purposes of human life. It is also closed, in that entry into it is only by birth and exit from it is only by death.[2]

This "Westphalian" understanding incorporated a dis-tinction of properly 'domestic' from properly international matters that was closely related to the distinction of public from private emerging more generally in modern social thought.[3] It underwrote, among other things, the exclusion of religion from allegedly "realist" international relations, a treatment of religion as essentially a domestic matter (and often by implication a private choice) that has informed not only liberal political theory but the entire discipline of inter-national relations. This has been closely related to liberal-ism's difficulties with 'strong' or 'thick' accounts of culture as constitutive for human subjectivity. Liberalism typically

presumes a theory of culture that it does not recognize as such, but instead treats somewhat ironically as an escape from culture into a more direct access to the universal—whether conceived as human nature, or human rights, or political process in the abstract.

More recently, pressed by the porousness of state borders in an era of intensified globalization, many liberals have recognized the difficulties with relying uncritically on nation-states to provide the framework within which liberal values are to be pursued. Allen Buchanan stated the case clearly in describing Rawls' version of liberal theory as "rules for a vanished Westphalian world."[4] To be precise, Buchanan challenged Rawls' international argument about a "law of peoples," not all of Rawls' liberal theory. There is in fact considerable controversy among those largely swayed by Rawls' earlier theory of justice over whether to accept his later law of peoples.[5] For many of these, the demands of justice as fairness simply must override both the norm of tolerance that Rawls' sees as underwriting a strong respect for different ways of life and the fact that the cohesion of actual existing social life is rooted in different historically created solidarities and ways of life. Others struggle more to reconcile respect for difference with the demands of a universalistic appeal to cosmopolitan justice.

But perhaps Rawls accepted too much from nationalist representations of "peoples" as discrete, culturally integrated entities. Nationalists often make strong claims to ethnic purity and cultural uniformity. But in fact part of the

importance of nationalism is the ways in which the national bridges a variety of differences. It does this not simply by providing an encompassing culture but by providing an arena for public debate and culture-making.[6]

Certainly greater global solidarity would be a good thing. But many liberal, cosmopolitan arguments rely on three tendentious assumptions. First, that it will be possible to create strong enough solidarities at a global scale to underwrite democratic mutual commitment (or to do so soon enough that pursuing these should have equal or higher priority to strengthening national solidarities and making them more democratic). Second, that justice, respect, and rights are more effectively secured for more human beings by approaching these as ethical universals than as moral obligations situated within particular solidarities and ways of life. And third, that an interest in or commitment to the universal (or the cosmopolitan) is based on the absence of culture (because culture is particularistic bias) rather than itself being a kind of cultural perspective.[7]

I have argued elsewhere about the importance of seeing cosmopolitanism as the presence of particular sorts of culture rather than the absence of culture, and about the extent to which access to the cosmopolitan is distributed on the basis of privilege.[8] What I want to stress here is the extent to which nationalism and democracy may—together—hold more potential for providing political solidarity across lines of cultural difference.

Structures of integration

A key part of the work that nationalism does is to provide cultural support for structures of social integration. Indeed, it is itself a source of such integration insofar as it structures collective identities and solidarities.[9]

Not everyone would consider this an obvious gain. Starting from the premiss that the primary obligation of each human being is to all others, a range of ethical cosmopolitans argue that any smaller scale solidarity requires specific justification—and starts out under the suspicion of being nothing more than an illegitimate expression of self-interest at the expense of justice for humanity at large.[10] I don't propose to take up such positions in detail here. Let it suffice to indicate that they are reached by starting with "bare" individuals as equivalent tokens of the universal type, humanity; that they treat culture and social relations as extrinisic to and not constitutive of these individuals; that they substitute abstract ethics for politics and particularly for a conception of politics as a world-making and therefore necessarily historically specific process such as that developed in the rhetorical tradition; and finally that they lack any sociological account of how humanity is to be integrated such that the abstract norms they articulate may concretely be achieved. Such a procedure may open up some ethical insights, but it runs the risk of substituting a pure ought for a practical politics. It also deflects our attention from the social, cultural, and historical conditions of democracy.

Democracy depends on social solidarity and social institutions. Nether is given to human beings as a matter of nature; they must be achieved through human imagination and action—in short, through history. As a result, all actually existing examples vary and all are imperfect. It is more helpful to approach them in a spirit of "pragmatic fallibalism" than radical ethical universalism, asking about improvements more than perfection, next steps more than ultimate ends.[11] This doesn't mean that there is no value in utopian dreams or efforts to imagine radically better societies; it does mean both that such dreams will be more helpful if they include attention to the social conditions of solidarity alongside among the abstract definitions of justice, and that in making abstract norms guides for practical action we will do well to temper them with recognition of historical circumstances.

Nations, and indeed all structures of social integration, have been achieved with more or less violence, including symbolic violence. This is neither a source of legitimacy nor a disqualification from it. No one gains rights from the blood of fallen ancestors. Neither does bloodshed render the institutions and solidarities that follow it mere results of force. That allegiances are in some part the result of symbolic violence and imposition, as for example countries are created in part by skewing resources towards capitals and making provincials embarrassed by rural accents, does not mean that there is necessarily a politically sensible project of undoing those allegiances either in favor of the universal or in order to restore prior local identities—or that this

might not itself be an imposition involving new symbolic violence.

Many nationalist ideologies—and indeed many versions of the discursive formation of nationalism itself—mislead in this regard. Nationalist rhetoric is commonly employed to produce the image of prepolitically unified populations when nations are always the result of at least partially political histories. This allows those who employ it to judge contemporary politics—and culture and economics—by the standard of a people understood as always already there, constituted in a kind of primal innocence outside the realm of ordinary politics. The people may be understood simply as given, on ethnic or other cultural grounds, or as the creation of martyrs, heroes and law-givers acting outside or above the normal politics of individual and sectional interests. Both images may be evoked at the same time. The important thing is the implication that the nation is established in advance of, separately from, the more quotidian developments which may then be judged as serving or failing to serve its interests.

Saying that this is an illusion does not make the illusion any less powerful, either in its grips on individual imaginations and emotions or in its capacity to constitute a cultural order. People who have read about "the invention of tradition" are still moved by national anthems and soccer teams, enlist in armies, and understand themselves to have "home" countries when they migrate.[12]

Nations are not the only or necessarily the primary structures of social integration of cultural identity. That they

are commonly represented as a kind of "trump card" against other identities, exaggerating national unity and giving short shrift to intranational diversity, is a form of symbolic violence. But national structures are important in the modern era both because they embody historical achievements and because globalization itself—a key ingredient of the entire modern era—creates a demand for mediating structures between humanity as a whole (or inhumanity as a whole, since that is as often what is achieved on a very large scale) and face-to-face interpersonal relations. Nations are important because integration beyond the level of family and community is important. This requires both culture and institutions. There is no reason to want all to be the same. Moreover, nations are not the only form for such integration—religions are also important. But the need for such integration means that nations are not simply "optional"; they may be restructured or replaced but there is no viable way simply to abandon them.

The integration nations help to achieve is of several sorts. They help to bind people together across social classes. They bridge regional and ethnic and sometimes religious differences. They link generations to each other, mobilizing traditions of cultural inheritance mutual obligation. They link the living to both ancestors and future generations. They do this not simply in ideology, but in social institutions which matter to the lives of individuals, families, and communities. Nations are integrated in educational systems, health care systems, and transportation systems.

Strengthening these is generally a national project. Certainly philanthropists moved by care for humanity at large also build schools and clinics and sometimes roads. But for the most part, these are achievements of nation-states; typically, they are public institutions (though this very public provision for the common good is currently under challenge). Not least of all, national integration is produced in the formation and sharing of new culture and in political arguments.

Nations accomplish all these linkages imperfectly, leaving room for contention. But this is what they do. They create peoples. At best, these are peoples in which the sentiment of common belonging is strong enough that it enables citizens to absorb the frustration of losing political battles over particular policies and leaders while remaining commited to the larger structure of integration. They are peoples able to utter (or believe they have uttered) phrases like "we the people" as it appears in the Preamble to the US Constitution:

We the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.

The idea of constituting a new country—making new social institutions to integrate people in a solidarity only partially inherited—has profound significance for democracy. Such acts of founding are reminders that the very

structures of integration that constitute countries are subject
to making—and potentially to democratic will-formation.
Democracy, in other words, is something more than electing
the least objectionable leaders.

Hannah Arendt generalized from such acts of revolu-
tionary founding of new countries to the potential for inno-
vative world-making—'natality'—in every act of political
speech.[13] Her argument is rooted in a rhetorical tradition that
stretches back to ancient Greece but which has been largely
occluded in modern political theory. Politics has been seen
as more about power than persuasion, more about perfecting
institutional arrangements than nurturing creativity. But
Arendt and the rhetorical tradition remind us of a strong
sense in which politics can be the creation of new institu-
tional arrangements and indeed, the remaking of the world.
Politics in this sense is ineluctably historical, culturally spe-
cific, and diverse.

If democracy is, following Arendt's lead, about the
ways in which people may creatively develop new ways of
living together, choose new institutional arrangements, and
even found new countries, then it is necessarily not simply a
matter of abstract design of the best formal procedures. It is
a matter of discerning ways to make the will and well-being
of ordinary people more determinative of the very formation
of social institutions as well as of specific decisions within
them. This can be informed by abstract, universal political
theory but it is also necessarily informed by concrete, histor-
ically and culturally specific circumstances.

From one side, nationalism is an internationally repro-
duced discursive formation full of pressures to make each
country into an isomorphic token of a global type. There are
pressures for conformity: each country should have a recog-
nizable government with ministers and other officials analo-
gous to those in other countries. Each should have a national
museum and national folklore, passports and border controls,
an authority to issue driving licenses and postage stamps.[14]
Countries also face similar problems and learn from each
other. But at the same time, in their more historically and cul-
turally specific dimensions, nationalisms mediate between
the isomorphic character of constructing tokens of a global
type and the historical particularities of tradition and cultural
creativity. Distinctive national self-understandings are pro-
duced and reproduced in literature, film, political de-
bate—and political grumbling, political jokes, and political
insults. These structure the ways in which people feel solidar-
ity with each other (and distinction from outsiders).

Modernist self-understanding commonly exaggerates
breaks with history and cultural traditions. Conscious plans
and rational choices are favored—even immediate expres-
sions of emotion are in more favor than adherence to tradi-
tion. Nationalism, however, is a way of claiming history
within a modernist frame. It is typically misleading for it
claims history through units of contemporary consciousness
and solidarity that did not necessarily exist in the past.

Thus archaeologists may speak of Sweden or Sudan
when describing sites and cultures millennia older than ei-

ther nation. Of course, the history that produced both Sweden and Sudan is a matter of imposition and drawing of boundaries by force, not simply of maturation. In different ways, each is troubled today by the international flows and forces of modernity—migrations, money and commodities, media. Each has difficulty with its internal diversity and leaders in each are tempted to assert untenable ethnic definitions of "proper" national identity. Sweden is transformed by European unification and Sudan has long been shaped by both pan-African and pan-Arab projects as it is now by transnational Islam as well as a geopolitical crisis reverberating throughout Northeast Africa, issues of trade and diplomacy making distant China an important counterpart, and human suffering that has brought a humanitarian response on a nearly global scale.

The stories of Sweden and Sudan do not simply pit longstanding, unquestioned, and culturally defined internal unity against new, troubling, and political-economic external forces. Internal diversity is part of the history of each. Some of the lines of diversity predate the history of each (as there were Arabs and Africans, Nubians and Nuer before there was a Sudan). And the history of each is partly a matter of producing what now are taken as defining boundaries (as seemingly obviously unitary Sweden not only includes territories whose integration was contested but doesn't include Estonia, Finland, or Norway). But it is also a matter of producing language, culture, distinctive social institutions and personal styles.

Nationality situates persons in time, in the world, and in relation to each other. Of course it is not the only identity anyone has. Nationality may be supplemented by a range of other categories of belonging and may be in tension with some—from religion to class. It could be replaced as a primary dimension of belonging; it could be transformed. But simply to imagine overcoming it without attending to the work it does would be a mistake.

Beyond primordiality *vs.* invention

National identities are neither simply inherited from a premodern past nor arbitrarily created by elites struggling for power and seeking to enlist followers in their projects. Some nationalist ideologues claim the former. Some debunking academics claim the latter. But thinking just in terms of these dimensions obscures the dynamic quality of culture and social organization. Rather than mere inheritance we need to recognize reproduction that always has room for selectivity, rearrangement and outright innovation. And cultural creativity is hardly limited to cynical manipulation. It is one of the crucial features of national identities that they contain the potential for self-transcendence. Just as individuals can want to be better than they are—want even to have better wants and desires—so national cultures incorporate norms, values, and understandings that point to better futures.[15] Nations can innovate in ways that transcend their mere immediate existence in other words, and they are

pushed to do so by social movements and indeed by art, moral discourse and sometimes even academic analysis. Even references to a glorious past may be criticisms of the present as much as sources of pride, and may underwrite efforts to make things better.

Academic analysts of nationalism are typically drawn to analyzing the "truth content" of national traditions. Examining received histories, thus, contemporary historians try to correct our views of the past. Nationalist historical claims and myths offer fertile ground for this exercise. To take an example now as familiar to American historians for its falsity as it was once a taken-for-granted truth of school lessons and a doxic part of the culture, there is no credible evidence that George Washington chopped down a cherry tree and confessed because he could not tell a lie. The story seems to have originated in the early 19th century with Mason Locke Weems (a clergyman—hence the more familiar name, Parson Weems—who actually made his living as a printer and found his most thriving market with stories of the founding fathers of the young nation). In more important ways as well, establishing clearer knowledge of a countries past, including its interrelationship with other countries, may be helpful in improving the quality of present politics. But while the writing of new histories may be more accurate, the production of common culture continues and is never quite reducible to truth or falsity for it is also a constitute framework for understanding.

Imagining a way out of culture in favor of truth content alone may be an illusion especially common in the modern era, but the idea of actively making culture in ways not reducible to mimesis has been at least as central to modernism. It is an ancient idea, of course, that through speech or artistic creativity or even craft work one may participate in making the world. In the modern era, something of the same idea has animated social movement activists who have sought not only to build "a new Jerusalem" but to imagine Jerusalems of the mind and make them real. Blake's notion of escaping "mind-forg'd manacles" has to do in part with escaping the ways received traditions of thought limit us, and in this it shares much with Enlightenment rationalism. But though Blake was an Enlightenment figure in some senses, he did not mean simply to replace received concepts with logical-empirical truths. He meant to facilitate the imagination and through it to help produce a better reality. So too modernist artists of the 20th century innovated both with new kinds of realism—painting or writing in ways that documented and reported on and critically analyzed mundane reality—and with new kinds of imaginary constructions and deconstructions—disengaging form and color and language from both realist and iconic representation. To claim only a specific point from a large and complex subject: modernist culture was often involved with transcendence of received culture through new creativity.

Modern political theory, nonetheless, has tended to focus on interests and values to the neglect of creativity, imag-

ination or rhetoric. Indeed, the rhetorical tradition so prominent in ancient thought has been to a considerable extent repressed. Prominent individuals like Hannah Arendt have appealed to it or renewed it, but their very insistence on it has made them distinctive. This has obscured the extent to which national culture (like all culture) is neither fixed inheritance nor cynical manipulation but vital precisely because reproduced in ways that include creativity.

Human creativity (what Arendt called "natality") opens the possibility of innovation—both in realizing more fully the existing culture and in ways more sharply different to it. Yet, much writing on nationalism and modernism (or modernity) tends to assume uncritically that the last five centuries of history reveal a unilateral decline in human diversity. Part of the problem is that researchers and political activists alike tend to focus on tracing continuities in named groups or nations. This is to some extent built into the discipline of history with its organization as a series of national histories.[16] When these disappear—as many of the *ethnie* of the past have in fact disappeared, it seems a loss of diversity.

The whole modern era has been shaped by globalization, moreover, and this has created new commonalities based on the central organization and expanded reach of commodity production and exchange. Various media bring common messages to remote sites more or less in real time. But it remains a considerable leap to assume that differences among human groups are simply inherited from the past.

Social scientists have surprisingly often accepted the proposition that nearly all of the important differences among human beings originated in the relatively distant past, and are thus *found* by rather than created in modernity. Here is Ernest Gellner:

> Cultural nuances in the agrarian world are legion: they are like raindrops in a storm, there is no counting of them. But when they all fall on the ground (…) [during modernization] they aggregate into a number of distinct, large, often mutually hostile puddles. The aggregation, the elimination of plurality and nuance anticipated by the internationalists, does indeed take place, but it leaves behind not one large universal culture-puddle, but a whole set of them.[17]

Gellner is disagreeing here with liberal internationalists who imagined that nations would give way to a single world-culture, but he accepts the notion that in the main diversity was produced in the past, and is now being erased (or at least consolidated) by "the tidal wave of industrialization or modernization."

This proposition has been sharply and rightly contested by a number of authors.[18] But it has surprising resilience. It is as though analysts imagine that there was great cultural creativity in tribal and agrarian societies, but that moderns wield only the capacity to homogenize, or manipulate, but not to create—and create differences. This view, I think, is one that early moderns helped to produce by the way they revered the classics and the way they understood both historical time, reason, and the struggle against prejudice. But it is false. And in fact, I don't think most social scientists be-

lieve it—that is, they don't really believe that peasant soci-
eties are more culturally fertile—they only write about
nationalism as though they believed this. What they seem
actually to believe is that the sort of "culture" that counts for
the construction of deeply felt ethnicity is necessarily an-
cient, even if obviously created at some point. Oddly, even
those who seek to demonstrate the novel and invented char-
acter of national culture tend to accept the same assumption.
They argue that "invented traditions," in the phrase of
Hobsbawm and Ranger, are not as real as those which grow
by gradual accretion over the centuries.[19] It is taken as obvi-
ous that the spread of CNN and McDonald's franchises, fol-
lowing the spread of English and global trade, simply
betoken growing uniformity of culture. This representation
of one historical trend leaves out others, including not only
resistance to this sort of modernism but the production of
competing modernisms.

Ethnic identities are not simply premodern. Ethnicity as
we understand it today is not the same as kinship. It is not
simply an inheritance from primordial times, whether in the
imagery of Wagnerian mists or African jungles. Rather, eth-
nicity is a product of confrontation among peoples of differ-
ent group identities and cultural backgrounds. It is a mode of
identity forged largely in cities, not in the countryside; in
migrations and military service not in staying home. Mi-
grants to cities developed ethnicity by accenting commonal-
ities with people to whom they would not necessarily have
been close in the countryside, people from the "wrong" clan

or a distant village. In the context of a city, these could appear as speakers of the same language, practitioners of the same religion, people with whom one could feel at home. But common ethnicity was not primarily a matter of specific relationships of marriage and descent, like those of kin-based societies, nor of place. Though ethnics might marry within their ethnic group, and even try to keep alive more specific norms about proper matches, the ethnic group was in fact a category rather than a network. That is, it was constructed out of cultural similarities salient in the urban context rather than the specific webs of relationships that constituted alliances and rivalries in the countryside. It might contain more or less of those webs of relationships, but it was not defined by them. Ethnic groups were and are defined by their juxtaposition to other ethnic groups and to the state. In the eyes of each other and under the gaze of the state, each tends to be a category, a set within which members are largely equivalent.[20] Ethnicity in this sense certainly existed in the premodern world, with religion often dominant in the ascriptive constructions, as in the Ottoman millet system. But ethnicity also flourished and was constructed anew in the modern rise of cities. In this sense, the construction of ethnicity out of kinship continues. New identities are formed. Many, like Asian-American, have no analog "at home" and cannot be understood simply as an amalgamation of prior local identities.

    In addition to transforming older identities and helping to produce new identities such as ethnicities, modern life oc-

casions increasing juxtapositions among identities. It brings a new "dynamic density" of intergroup contacts (to borrow Durkheim's under-remarked phrase). Markets, media, migration, state-building, and the growth of cities all bring together people of different cultural and social-organizational backgrounds. This is not radically new; trading cities and the capitals of empires always produced contact across cultural lines. But the contacts are intense, particularly in certain key nexuses of global flows. Even without the production of new identities, therefore, modernity helps to produce in each person a greater awareness of diversity of identities. The world of others is represented to each person in terms of a welter of different groups. As in the past, and perhaps more often, many individuals experience belonging to more than one of these at the same time.[21]

New differences are created, and suppressed differences are given new public voice. Science, for example, may be universalistic as in the stereotype of modernism, but it produces change and multiplication and diversities of knowledges. The very expansion of what is known—far beyond the capacity of any single human knower—makes it inevitable than the common knowledge of different groups will partake differentially of the ever-expanding whole. Beyond science, literary and artistic activity produces novel culture all the time, and at least as much now as ever before. They also are appreciated in different communities of reception and help thus to contribute to cultural differentiations among groups (as in the way Asian-American novels may

help to make, not just reflect, Asian-Americans). There is also an expansion of occupations and economic niches in the modern world. A quick glance at the Dictionary of Occupational Titles produced by the U.S. government should give pause to anyone who thinks diversity is being erased, even if most of these exist in capitalist labor markets that commodify labor and establish class differences. So should the inverse thought: wasn't the way of life of traditional peasants impressively uniform, at least within broad ecological and material-cultural zones?

Indeed, local communities vary a great deal today, and at least in the world's richer countries afford the relatively novel luxury of choice of "lifestyles." The differences from one peasant village to another in Vietnam or Burkina Faso are hard to describe in terms of this kind of diversity, but despite widespread condemnation of the homogeneity of suburbs by comparison to cities, there is this sort of diversity—at least up to a point—between one suburb and another in Westchester County. But lifestyle communities are not generally coincident with local government boundaries. Look at the emergence of more strongly self-identified and publicly recognized communities based on sexual orientation. Homosexuality may have existed through history (though there are tendentious issues of definition here that I do not want to try to engage at the moment). But opportunities to form differentiated social groups based on gay lifestyles—or indeed other lifestyles "alternative" to conventional heterosexual family formation—have certainly proliferated more

recently. This is an achievement unevenly distributed both among and within "modern" countries, but it is also modernist, not post or pre-modern.

Finding ways to integrate culturally diverse populations has been central to modern nationalism. Sometimes this amounts to trying to impose new common culture against others, and this of course may be done with both material and symbolic violence. Such repression of difference can mark anti-colonial and democratic struggles, moreover, as they seek to forge new solidarity in the cause of overcoming external power. In the pursuit of Algerian independence from France, for example, the nationalist movement was also an Arabicizing movement. Algeria's Berber populations suffered a double repression.

But nationalism is not always simply homogenizing. Nationalists can struggle to develop institutions and cultural practices that facilitate connections across lines of cultural difference without suppressing any. The solidarity of national populations need not depend only on cultural similarity or the categorical identity in which each citizen is a token of the national type. It may also be developed out of the incorporation of mediating communities into the whole, based on recognition of functional interdependence, or embodied in the formation of public culture, discourse, and debate. National arenas for public culture are important and may achieve solidarity amid contest and diversity. Such public life is necessarily culture-forming, not only rational-critical. And while it certainly involves arguments, it also involves other modes of communication and expression.

Cultures of democracy

One reason not to dismiss nation-states as structures of integration is because they embody collective histories of struggle. National liberation movements have fought not only for sovereignty but for the opportunity to build new social institutions. Constitution-making and sometimes revolution have reshaped the conditions of collective life. Relations among specific religious communities and efforts to overcome clashes have forged projects of mutual co-existence that are not grasped by the notion of secularism as the mere absence of religion or toleration as an altogether abstract value. Workers have fought to gain economic rights and security. Democracy itself has been won in collective struggles, not simply designed in political theory, and democratic practices are grounded in different traditions as a result. These histories are resources for further struggles; they are situating and orienting backgrounds to democratic action. These histories, moreover, have been in large part nation-making histories. Nehru's classic *The Discovery of India* is of course also a story of the making of India (and an act of claiming a particular history as part of that making).[22] So too France and America, Russia and Rwanda have all been made not simply found. The struggles that have made them may stretch over shorter or longer periods of time, may have been more or less democratic, and more or less violent. But they leave each with a distinctive context for democratic action today.

From 18th century revolutions, to the 19th century "springtime of peoples" to mid-20th century post-colonial independence movements, nationalism has often been closely linked to the pursuit of greater self-government. Clearly the idea of "self-determination" puts a great deal of pressure on the idea of "self." This is full of strains for individuals and even more for nations. In each case, though, the idea of self and the further idea of self-determination is basic both to the social imaginary of modernity and to critical engagement with forms of domination.

At the individual level, debates about what constitutes such a self inform and were informed by the emergence of modern ideas of legal personality, a growing emphasis on the autonomy of moral subjects, and psychological concerns for the integration and integrity of the person. Understanding of collective selves grew in close tandem with that of individual persons. At its most influential, collective self-determination demanded a self composed not of a dynasty or a state, nor of a disconnected, unintegrated population, but of *a* people, an organized, meaningfully integrated collectivity. This the idea of nation supplied.

The emancipation of the nation from empire and dynasty went hand in hand with the emancipation of the person from subjection to patriarchy, religion, and village custom. Subjects were rethought from the vantage point of the nation. Strengthening the nation meant, many nationalists argued, liberating the capacities of individual citizens. It is no accident that projects of linguistic reform have been nearly

universal features of nationalist (and democratic) projects. Aristocracies used language partly to partial out differential standing, forever distinguishing refined from vulgar usage. Democracies claimed rights to public participation for all the people—the nation. Equally, advocates of national self-strengthening sought the education of those same people, and often their inclusion in the political process.

Just as individuals could take on projects of self-reform, self-strengthening, and moral improvement, so could nations. An ancient concept, 'nation' was as much transformed in the modern era as the idea of person. In their transformed and never quite fixed meanings, each term was also constitutive of modernity. Though represented sometimes as opposites, the two ideas were intimate partners. They were joined among other things by the claim to refer to integral, indivisible wholes—individuals. Likewise, their objects were presented as simultaneously natural, always already there, and in need of energetic making, of *bildung* (to echo the classic arguments of Herder and Fichte).

To be sure, movements for national independence often empowered certain elites and subordinated some citizens. Many easily shifted into projects of subjection of other populations or repression of other nations. But to understand nationalism only as a rhetoric of domination would wrongly denigrate the meaning and accomplishments of national liberation movements. These have not only fought external oppression, they have brought much wider ranges of people into the political process. They have often helped to create

the nations whose independence they sought, but also to create citizens (even if post-liberation politics has often undone many of the gains).

In every democratic struggle, the solidarity of "the people" has been forged from a range of specific cultural and social sources. This is not merely a matter of finding common denominators among an externally identified population. It is a matter of cultural creativity, personal decision and persuasion. All tradition is invented; all identities are in some degree chosen in competition with other possible ways of forging personality and social ties. How much anyone will emphasize nation, or religion, or class is not a matter of abstract rational calculation of interest but of innumerable highly situated decisions, of what becomes habit, and occasionally of commitments made at dramatic junctures. People arrive at both their daily small decisions and their rare moments of major self-defining choice by diverse trajectories and in diverse contexts. Democracy, accordingly, must develop with diverse cultures. It will differ among nations. It will also differ within them, as different people struggle to make something better of their people and for their people.

Nationalism is always Janus-faced, as Tom Nairn has stressed.[23] Not only does it look both backward and forward, it simultaneously embodies claims to distinctive cultural identities and social solidarities and to legitimate global standing and at least partial sovereignty. It mediates as few other political rhetorics can between the production of inter-

nal solidarity and the need for external recognition. It helps
to voice a sense of belonging together that is shaped by
shared culture and social relations and that is crucial not just
to the exercise but to the pursuit of democracy. For national-
ism is a rhetoric available in the active as well as the passive
voice.

It is not just a matter of chance that democracy happens
to come into the world shaped by different cultural tradi-
tions, social relations, and geopolitical contexts. It is of the
very nature of democracy that it should exist in plural forms,
created by different people as they struggle with different
circumstances. The specific reach of different nations is log-
ically arbitrary, but historically meaningful. Nations reflect
not merely communities of fate, but of mutual and collective
responsibility.

Conclusion

The nation-state neither can be nor should be wished
away. Source of so many evils, it is also the framework in
which the modern era produced history's most enduring and
successful experiments in large-scale democracy. It is basic to
the rule of law, not only because most law remains a domestic
matter of nation-states but because most international law is
literally that: structured and enforced by agreements among
nation-states. Not least of all, while globalization has pro-
duced innumerable paths across state borders, it has opened
these very unevenly and disproportionately to the benefit of

those with access to high levels of fluid capital. Conversely, it
has made belonging to a nation-state and having clear rights
within a nation-state more, not less important. The fact re-
mains, as Hannah Arendt observed more than half a century
ago: human rights are secured mainly when they are institu-
tionalized as civil rights.[24]

To recognize that there is a community of fate and re-
sponsibility at the level of the entire world makes sense. But
liberal cosmopolitanism does not provide the proximate sol-
idarities on the basis of which better institutions and greater
democracy can be built. Nations are the most important of
such solidarities. Moreover, while cosmopolitan ethics may
explain why it is good for individuals to give to global chari-
ties, they do not adequately explain the obligations those
who benefit from living in rich countries have to those
whose lives are limited because of the way in which capital-
ism and the world system of states have organized the distri-
bution of both wealth and the "illth" that is created by many
efforts to pursue wealth.[25] This is so because the benefits de-
rive from the embeddedness of individual lives in national
histories and contexts. If for example Americans are to pay
reparations to countries damaged by the slave trade or other
injustices, it will be because the very possibility of life as an
individual American today rests on the unjust historical
background. The remedy will depend not merely on a global
idea of equality or justice but on the mediating solidarity.
This alone will make it a felt and actionable collective re-
sponsibility.

Approaches to liberal cosmopolitanism that do not take seriously the work nationalism does in the modern era and that do not work with stronger appreciation and understanding of solidarity and subjectivity, are as apt to be pernicious as progressive in actual politics. For nationalism is not only deeply imbricated in the social arrangements of the modern era, it is basic to movements to challenge and improve those social arrangements.

The necessity of nations in contemporary global affairs is not something in itself to be celebrated. They are starting points, institutional mechanisms, and frameworks of struggle more than indicators of ultimate values or goals. In one of the common meanings of the word, indeed, nationalism refers to a passionate attachment to one's own nation that underwrites outrageous prejudice against others. But we should not try to grasp the phenomenon only through instances of passionate excess or successful manipulation by demagogues. For nationalism is equally a discursive formation that facilitates mutual recognition among polities that mediate different histories, institutional arrangements, material conditions, cultures, and political projects in the context of intensifying globalization. Nationalism offers both a mode of access to global affairs and a mode of resistance to aspects of globalization. To wish it away is more likely to invite the dominance of neoliberal capitalism than to usher in an era of world citizenship.

Not least of all, nationalism is a reminder that democracy depends on solidarity. This may be achieved in various

ways. It is never achieved outside of history and culture. Democratic action, therefore, is necessarily the action of people who join with each other in particular circumstances, recognizing distinctive dimensions of belonging together. Nationalist ideologies sometimes encourage the illusion that belonging together is either natural or so ancient as to be prior to all contemporary choices. But liberalism conversely encourages neglect of the centrality of solidarity and especially the cultural constitution of historical specificity of persons—potential subjects of liberal politics. More helpfully, we can recognize that solidarities, including but not limited to national ones, are never simply given but have to be produced and reproduced. This means they are subject to change; this change may be pursued in collective struggle. Women and minority groups have been integrated into the political life of many modern states not simply despite nationalism (though certainly despite certain versions of nationalism), but through the transformation of nationalism. Nationalism then becomes in part the history of such struggles.

Nationalism also underpins social institutions created in the course of historical struggles, such as public schools, health care, and other dimensions of welfare states. It may underpin struggles to defend such institutions—and the very idea of the public good—against neoliberal privatization. The institutions differ from each other, and struggle is necessarily about improving them not simply protecting them. The same is true of culture and structures of social relations.

These are constitutive for democracy, but they are also subject to democratic action and change. For these reasons, the cultures of democracy necessarily differ from each other.

Notes

1. Nationalism is a "discursive formations," in Foucault's sense; see *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, New York, Pantheon, 1969, and *Power/*Knowledge, New York, Pantheon, 1977. That is, it is a way of talking that inescapably exceeds the bounds of any single usage, that endlessly generate more talk, and that embody tensions and contradictions. Nationalism is not simply a settled position, but a cluster of rhetoric and reference that enables people to articulate positions which are not settled and to take stands in opposition to each other on basic issues in society and culture. Nationalist rhetoric provides the modern era with a constitutive framework for the identification of collective subjects, both the protagonists of historical struggles and those who experience history and by whose experience it can be judged good or bad, progress or regress or stagnation. In this, nationalism most resembles another great discursive formation, also constitutive for modernity, individualism. See Calhoun, *Nationalism*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1997.
2. John Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1993, p. 41.
3. Of course it is worth recalling that the 1648 Peace of Westphalia did not transform the world overnight into one of strongly institutionalized nation-states and international relations. It is more a myth or symbol for the project of remaking the world in these terms than a token of such achievement. See Benno Teschke, *The Myth of 1648: Class, Geopolitics and the Making of Modern International Relations*, London, New York, Verso, 2003.
4. Allen Buchanan, "Rawls' Law of Peoples: Rules for a Vanished Westphalian World," *Ethics*, v. 110, n. 4, 2000, p. 697-21.

5. Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 1971; Rawls, *The Law of Peoples*, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 1999; see also Charles R. Beitz, "Rawls' Law of Peoples," *Ethics*, v. 110, n. 4, 2000, p. 669-96, and Rex Martin and David Reidy, eds., *Rawls's Law of Peoples: A Realistic Utopia?*, Oxford, Blackwell, 2006.

6. By "encompassing" I mean to echo Louis Dumont's argument about the ways in which culture may bring together dimensions that cannot be logically integrated. National cultures often encompass different subcultures without integrating them, encompass logically contradictory values, creating nonetheless a sense in which they belong as parts of the larger whole. See Dumont, *Homo Hierarchicus*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1966.

7. The best and most careful of such cosmopolitan theoretical visions come from Jürgen Habermas (e.g., *Inclusion of the* Other, Cambridge, MIT Press, 1998); and David Held (e.g., *Democracy and the Global* Order, Cambridge, Polity, 1995). See also essays in Daniele Archibugi and Held, *Cosmopolitan Democracy*, Cambridge, Polity, 1995; Archibugi, Held and Martin Köhler, *Re-Imagining Political Community*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1998; Archibugi, *Debating* Cosmopolitics, London, Verso, 2003; and Steven Vertovec and Robin Cohen, *Conceiving Cosmopolitanism*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2002. These cosmopolitan visions are clearly Kantian; for elaboration of that heritage see James Bohman and Matthias Lutz-Bachmann, *Perpetual Peace: Essays on Kant's Cosmopolitan Ideal*, Cambridge, MA, 1997. My reference here is mainly to these more political theories of cosmopolitanism, not to the accounts of "vernacular cosmopolitanism" in which some anthropologists and historians have urged us to look at the more concrete and often local transactions and cultural productions in which people actually forge relations with each other across lines of difference. See Pollock, et al. In a sense, I pursue in this paper a meeting point between these two perspectives, one which I think is impossible to discern if one focuses only on transcending the nation, imagining the world mainly globally "at large"

and relating this to the local and immediate rather than emphasizing the importance of the mediating institutions of which nations and states are among the most important.

8. See Calhoun, *Cosmopolitanism and* Belonging, London, Routledge, forthcoming.

9. Nationalism figures prominently as an example of "categorical" identities in which each individual figures as an equivalent token of the larger type. But this does not exhaust the ways in which national culture matters to the production of solidarity. Common language and frameworks of meaning, for example, may integrate people without suggesting that they are equivalent. Common projects create alliances among otherwise dissimilar people. Communities understand their solidarity to be embeddedness in webs of relationships as well as "categorical" distinctions from other communities. Of course, culture may also figure as ideology underwriting, for better or worse, functional integration among national institutions or nationally organized markets, and direct exercise of power. See Calhoun, *Cosmopolitanism and Belonging*, Routledge, forthcoming.

10. Martha Nussbaum can serve as an exemplar of such "extreme cosmopolitans" reasoning from the ethical equivalence of individuals. See her *For Love of Country*, Boston, Beacon, 1996. See also discussion in Samuel Scheffler, *Boundaries and Allegiances: Problems of Justice and Responsibility in Liberal* Thought, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2001, and Calhoun, "Belonging in the Cosmopolitan Imaginary," *Ethnicities*, v. 3, n. 4, 2003, p. 531-53.

11. See Richard Bernstein, *The Abuse of Evil*, Cambridge, Polity, 2005, ch. 2.

12. Hobsbawm and Ranger, writing in *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1983, are thus right about invention but wrong about its implications.

13. Arendt, *On Revolution*, New York, Penguin, 1963; *Between Past and Future*, New York, Viking, 1968.

14. This side of nationalism is emphasized by institutionalist theories such as the "world polity" theory of John Meyer and a range of col-

leagues. See, e.g., Meyer and Brian Rowan, "Institutionalized Organizations: Formal Structure as Myth and Ceremony" *American Journal of Sociology*, v. 83, n. 2, 1977, p. 340-63.

15. See Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 1989, on horizons of moral judgment and the idea of self-transcendence.

16. This is increasingly contested, both by the writing of global history and by efforts to internationalize national histories. See for an example of the latter, Thomas Bender, *A Nation among Nations*, New York, Hill and Wang, 2006, and the reflections on internationalizing American history in his edited collection, *Rethinking America in a Global* Age, Berkeley, University of California Press, 2002.

17. Ernest Gellner, *Nationalism*, New York, New York University Press, 1997, p. 34.

18. See for example Arjun Appadurai, "Difference and Disjuncture in the Global Cultural Economy," *Public Culture*, v. 2, n. 2, 1990, p. 1-24, and the *Public Culture* special issue on "Alternative Modernities" (Dilip Gaonkar, ed.), v. 11, n. 1, 1999.

19. Hobsbawm and Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition*.

20. I have elaborated on this theme, and on the language of category and network at more length in *Nationalism*, esp. ch. 3. My usage is indebted to the anthropological distinction of clan and lineage, and to the specific formulation of S. F. Nadel, *The Theory of Social Structure*, London, Cohen and West, 1965.

21. The popularity of mixed race self-identifications in the US Census of 2000 is an example, but of course the categories to which people feel they belong are not all ethnic; they may be based on a variety of membership criteria from class and religion to sexual orientation or occupation.

22. *The Discovery of India* not only integrates the Vedas, the Gitas, the Mughals, and the Congress Party into a single national story, it does this in a style influenced by Western narrative history and in, English, the language of British colonialism which India made also one of her own.

23. Faces of Nationalism: Janus Revisited, London, Verso, 1998.
24. Arendt, *Totalitarianism*.
25. The useful concept of "illth"—the negative counterparts to wealth, like environmental degradation — was introduced in 1860 by John Ruskin; see the title essay in *Unto this Last and Other Writings*, London, Penguin, 1986. It remains inadequately integrated into economic thought. "Negative externalities" addresses related problems but more narrowly from the perspective of the individual economic actor.